new masses

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Pushed by OWI Into Red Film, Says Taylor
By RUTH MONTGOMERY
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Legality of House Probe
19 Witnesses Say Investigation Is
Taylor Plays Hero of 'Un-American' Script
MOUTHPIECE FOR MOVIE FIGURES IS GIVEN THE HE
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Charge Hollywood Agent
Got Plane Secrets Afte
Being Sent West by D
Reds Disrupt
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INQUISITION in TECHNICOLOR

A first-hand report by
JOSEPH NORTH

Sweet Mystery of LIFE

by
CHARLES HUMBOLDT

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Poet, Playwright, Writer, Musician, Editor:

We Speak for Howard Fast

The cases of Howard Fast and the other victims of the Un-American Activities Committee are beginning to stir the country. NEW MASSES *presents excerpts from a few of the speeches that were made at the October 16 protest meeting to defend Mr. Fast which was jointly sponsored by NM and "Mainstream."*

Louis Untermeyer, *poet and critic*

I will begin by saying that I am not a Communist nor am I sure of their aims or their methods. But as an American in good standing, so far at least, may I say that I object very vigorously to the hysteria which brands anyone who dares question the policy, if any, of our government and smears any critic of the government with the charge of communism.

Howard Fast is my friend and as a friend I would stand up for him no matter what he may have done. But even were Howard Fast not my friend, I would speak up for him as a fellow writer who also happens to be a brave spirit. I hope it is not unpatriotic for me to say that this country still needs many things and it doesn't need anything more desperately than it needs writers and brave spirits. When writers cannot write what they please and brave spirits cannot help noble causes, then God help America!

Theodore Ward, *playwright*

On Broadway tonight the company of *Our Lan'* is fighting for the preservation on the stage of a little slice of American history. Here at Manhattan Center we and the gathering host of lovers of the arts and freedom of speech throughout America together are fighting for the preservation of our civil rights and the reputation and freedom of one of the most widely read, most beloved of American authors.

I would say to Mr. Thomas and the Un-American Committee and likewise to all other tools of reaction, they delude themselves in thinking they can long run counter to the Bill of Rights, which is based upon the will and aspirations of the American people, for, as in every previous crisis in our history, the people will have the last word.

Richard O. Boyer, *writer*

There is, as we all know, more involved here tonight than the liberty of Howard Fast, important as that is. Literally and factually it is the liberty of our country which is at stake.

In the past decade there have been so many warnings and alarms that we are in danger of regarding this unpleasant fact as mere rhetoric. But now writers are being sent to prison. Composers are being exiled. Trade union leaders are being deported. Anti-fascists are being sent to prison because they are anti-fascists—and this isn't rhetoric. Neither is it rhetoric that the American Congress is subverting America's charter of rights.

The method of the Un-American Committee, as we all know too well, is to call everyone a Communist. I think we should meet them on their own ground. I think that every American who believes in the First Amendment should fight for the right of any American to be a Communist if he wishes to be one. To take any lesser ground is to desert the First Amendment, to surrender it to Rankin. To take any lesser stand is to ask for defeat by the Rankin committee.

It should be plain enough that if one concedes the right of American officials to persecute Communists, then he also inevitably concedes the right to persecute their sympathizers. With that beginning, there is no end. After that, the Deluge. After that, fascism.

Artie Shaw, *musician*

What is un-American? You know, you can use up a lot of words in answering the question and still be nowhere without the realization that this is not a matter of words but of principles. Americanism is a principle and it is not a word to be kicked around and used as a club whenever that seems expedient.

Principles of this sort are not easily definable. A fairly representative American, a fellow named Abraham Lincoln, once said, "Important principles may and must be flexible." Unfortunately a lot of people who are today concerning themselves with this principle have not taken the trouble to examine it any too closely.

But the case against the eleven board members of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee is certainly clear enough. It is a threat not against eleven people but against any progressive citizen in the United States who dares to take a stand against the forces of reaction. This isn't eleven people fighting injustice and persecution. It is a fight against national injustice and it is one in which we are all engaged.

Angus Cameron, *editor of Little, Brown & Co.*

I wish I could say, as one usually does when addressing an audience of friends, that I am happy to be here. This is not true. I am very unhappy to be here. In fact, I am ashamed that an occasion like this should be necessary, as it is necessary, in the America of Paine, Washington, Altgeld and Howard Fast. However, I am very happy to have a chance to meet with the others here and to speak to you. As an admirer of Howard Fast's artistry and courage and what he stands for, I am happy likewise to speak a word against thought control in the United States and against those un-Americans in Congress and elsewhere who are carrying on this assault against most precious civil rights.

You know, there is a persistent rumor that some time after the Hollywood investigation the Un-Americans intend to carry their intimidation into other areas of American culture. It is true there seems to be some difference of opinion whether the book publishers will be sandwiched in between Hollywood people and professors and educators or vice versa. However, it is clear that these haters of the American tradition of democracy and freedom, these enemies of culture do not mean to stop until they have closed the mouths and minds of the American people.

Yes, it is true that there are dangerous thoughts in this country of ours today. The only dangerous thoughts are those which lead to the control of thought and its suppression.

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TORQUEMADA in TECHNICOLOR

In Washington the Kleigs burn brilliantly — like a bonfire of books, or an open-door oven. There's even an Adolph.

By JOSEPH NORTH

Washington.

I can't help it if nobody else saw this: I'll stick by my guns. I wasn't surprised when Torquemada glided into the room, blinked in the kleig lights and pulled the cowl over his eyes. Nor did it startle me to see J. Parnell Thomas hasten to greet him: "Father," he said, "come on in. We've been waiting." I heard Torquemada reply he had been detained elsewhere longer than expected, but that he was able to finish his duties in time to come as promised. His eyes surveyed the bizarre scene: the cyclopean cameras whirring in their black hoods, the excited crowds of bosomy matrons in the halls, the immaculate actor on the witness-stand blowing cigarette smoke past his waxed mustaches, the blue uniforms of the police, the black-goggled eyes of the reporters protecting their sight from the solar brilliance of the kleigs. The lean figure in the cowl scanned the audience until his eyes fell on the men designated as unfriendly witnesses. "Their spirits," the priest said after a moment's scrutiny, "are unchastened. My way," he added thoughtfully, "was better." The little fat man brooded a moment. "You may be right," he responded, "but yours was a better time." The priest lowered his eyelids. "Yet," he said judiciously, "half a millenium may have prompted better ways, but I contend there is eternal truth in things time-honored." The little man buttoned his coat carefully. "You may be right, father," he repeated thoughtfully. "Just give me time."

THE Capitol glowed in a brilliant Indian summer sun when the curtain lifted one Monday morning upon as eerie a scene as America had ever witnessed. The five inquisitorial faces, masking an exultant excitement, peered down upon a multitude seated beneath the great crystal chandeliers that tinkled with the popping of camera bulbs. The round, purplish face of Rep. J. Parnell Thomas shone over his tight-fitting collar as he rapped his ebony gavel and called for silence. Our eyes blinked through the million-watt glare of the lights to discover a slight, immaculately clad figure which had something of the suppliant about it. The name Jack Warner rustled across the jammed room as he lifted his forearm after the chairman and swore his oath. He had walked across the front of the hall escorted by the large handsome figure of his counsel, Paul V. McNutt, who towered over his client like a gray dreadnought escorting a yacht. But he was, at that moment, a dreadnought with guns spiked as Parnell Thomas sharply replied to McNutt's respectful question whether he might cross-examine. No, snapped the Jersey legislator, no cross-examination; the eminent man would be treated exactly as all other counsel had been or would be. The chairman's bearing implied that all would soon see who's boss here. The former high commissioner of the Philippines took it with weary silence and let his heavy, imposing frame descend meekly into the chair. The show was on.

A sort of macabre Mardi Gras air hangs over the proceedings, a spurious gaiety that scarcely veils the sinister reality beneath. For example: when Robert Taylor came to testify, the corridors of the old House Building were jammed with crowds far too large to be accomodated. I lingered in the queue a moment. "Quite a show," I remarked to one youngster with books under his arm, evidently just out of a class-room. He glanced at me and remained silent. "How do you like it?" I continued. He seemed about to reply, reconsidered, then asked sharply, "What do you want to know for?" I shrugged my shoulders. "Oh, just asking." He shook his head. "I don't know who you are," he replied carefully. "For all I know you might be from the FBI." I laughed. Then I looked at his books under-arm, his fresh, young face, and I felt a sudden anger. So this is what it comes to: the American, with some nameless dread, fears to exchange even chit-chat with his neighbor. You damn the diabolic gall of the inquisitors filling the heads of our young with such trash. You get heartsick watching the bobby-soxers titter, drinking in every reprehensible syllable their screen favorites utter here. The immorality of this business is revolting. Truly, it is the Nuremburg book-burning—in Technicolor.

I found it hard to contain myself and spilled some of this to a reporter from Philadelphia in the Press Club afterward. Many of his fraternity, too, squirm at the proceedings and must, inevitably, feel a sense of guilt. There they sit, hour upon hour, utterly cynical about the testimony, privately acknowledging that it is rubbish and worse; yet their stories pour out across the page, filling acres of newsprint, and they are constrained to write it straight—no question, no comment—turning out what the front office de-

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mands. This reporter shrugged his shoulders when I mentioned the supersonic spy tale refuted by the War Department within a matter of hours after it made headlines in a thousand cities. "Oh," he said uneasily, "that *was* the testimony, wasn't it? I wrote *'alleged,'* didn't I?" He had no reply when I asked him what he thought of the probable consequences to the pilot, the literary agent, the Communist Party, to the mind of America. After all, the story made banner headlines and as usual, as you know, the refutation was buried within the reams of copy.

So IT has been throughout all the testimony I have heard. Oh, Hollywood is full of subversives. . . . Will you name some? . . . Well, I don't know any personally, but I know a lot who sure act like subversives. . . . What do they do? . . . Well, they come early to meetings, start asking questions when the meeting should end and then it drags on till one-two in the morning (Robert Taylor). Multiply this sort of thing with little variation a few hundred times and you have the essence of the testimony to date.

I am writing this for our deadline, near the end of the first week's testimony, but the pattern is clear enough. It is like hearing a cracked record in which the needle sticks. Yes, the pattern is so clear, so alarming that even some of the most conservative journals of the nation have written editorials, as did the arch-conservative Washington *Star* here, to the effect that "the case against these people has been made up of hearsay, impression and gossip." Most of the journals, outside the Cissie Patterson-New York *Daily News* camp, remark upon the dangers of this inquisition to themselves and to other institutions, and they express alarm over the proceedings. This does not, of course, prevent them from plastering the "testimony" over Page One throughout the course of the hearings, giving by far the greatest prominence in space and headlines to the patent libels, even though they may simultaneously run editorials opposing the proceedings. Such are the wonders of the free American press in which Page One does not give a damn what Page Two is saying.

Most of the reporters here were startled, as I was, at the spectacle of little Jack Warner that first day. With many other writers here I had heard that the producers would put up a scrap, for clearly they sense the danger of censorship and want no part of it. So I was surprised at the movie magnate's behavior. It is never good to see a man grovel, but I saw it. I never thought I would see one hundred million dollars crawling on its belly, but I saw that too. It is a strange sight, but it is not educational. Mr. McNutt has not explained to anyone why he felt it necessary to allow his clients, Messrs. Warner and Mayer, to give their self-abasing performances, but it continued for two days—until suddenly, as though exasperated beyond endurance, Mr. McNutt found the proceedings "shocking."

The reasons for that are probably multiple, but I hope one arose when Charles J. Katz, prominent California attorney, was violently ejected from the premises at Mr. Thomas' nod. This may not as yet be the occasion, but if Mr. Katz could go, it is quite con-

Unfair...

New York *Times,* October 23.

". . . an investigation of this kind, once begun, has no ready stopping-place. One of the government's witnesses has already declared that Broadway is worse than Hollywood in the matter of Communist penetration, and that the reading departments of the publishing houses are 'very, very heavily infiltrated with Communists.' Are we now to go on from Hollywood to Broadway, and then from Broadway to the publishing houses, searching for aspects all along the line, and after that carry the hunt into the radio and then into the American press? That would be a wholly logical procedure, on the premise the Congressional committee has adopted.

"We do not believe that the committee is conducting a fair investigation. We think the course on which it has embarked threatens to lead to greater dangers than those with which it is presently concerned."

Offensive...

New York *Herald Tribune,* October 22.

". . . the beliefs of men and women who write for the screen are, like the beliefs of any ordinary men and women, nobody's business but their own as the Bill of Rights mentions. Neither Mr. Thomas nor the Congress in which he sits is empowered *to dictate what Americans shall think.* . . .

"Not Hollywood but Congress is being investigated here, and once again the testimony indicates that the system of Congressional investigating committees needs overhauling. The entire process, in which a committee chairman is allowed unlimited freedom and his targets must remain simply targets, is inherently offensive and should be changed to bring some degree of equality into the proceedings."

Because...

MONTHS ago the brief submitted by the defense for Eugene Dennis, general secretary of the Communist Party, who was convicted for "contempt" of the Un-American Committee, declared: "The fact is that Congress has empowered the Committee [on Un-American Activities] to inquire into matters upon which Congress has no constitutional power to legislate. Freedom of speech and the press, the dissemination of ideas in whatever form or forum, lie in an area into which government may not encroach. . . . The committee's view is that the competition in the marketplace of ideas shall be turned into a monopoly of ideas by the advocates of status quo; that those who advocate social changes shall be repressed and gagged; that the people shall not learn the truth from the free trade of ideas but rather that the advocates of social change, and the people, shall conform upon pain of punishment and ostracism. This, of course, is the familiar Nazi pattern which led the German people to the destruction, first, of their freedoms; second, to a war of aggression; and finally, to their physical destruction and annihilation."

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ceivable that Mr. McNutt might go next, despite his imposing figure. It is not a nice sight to see an attorney landing unceremoniously on the sidewalk outside a Congressional building merely because he wanted to say something about the United States Constitution.

Whatever the reasons, it is all to the good that Mr. McNutt was ultimately "shocked," for there remains a considerable gap between the conservative and the fascist. Inevitably there has developed on the issue of the Un-American witch-hunt a certain identity of interest between the Hollywood magnates and their writers and actors, and it is to their mutual advantage, as well as to that of our people as a whole, that Parnell Thomas does not become the super-producer of America's films, which is precisely the meaning of this jamboree despite all the careful protestations of the inquisitors.

SOMETHING more is involved in all this: the producers will not save their own skins by generously offering up those of their writers. If they tag along with J. Parnell in denying the writers the privilege of opinion, no matter how fundamental their disagreements, J. Parnell has them over a barrel. No, Messrs. Warner, Mayer, Wood *et al* cannot escape their dilemma by out-shouting the un-Americans on the question of banning the Communist Party, on the deprivation of constitutional guarantees. The hearings proved that soon enough, in the *Song of Russia* fracas. Perhaps it was that which caused Mr. McNutt and his clients to stiffen their backs, for it revealed the utter contempt the inquisitors had for them, despite all their perfervid protestations. The magnates had already testified to their undying hatred of communism, their uttermost abhorrence of anything smacking of it, their desire to outlaw the Communist Party. Mr. Warner had volunteered in a final spasm of total agreement with one of Inquisitor Nixon's long, Red-baiting effusions, "I'm for everything you said a hundred percent. You made the statement of a real American; yes sir, you did." Mr. Mayer had behaved similarly. But that did not forestall a tortuous inquisition on the movie *Mission to Moscow* (Mr. Warner's) or *Song of Russia* (Mr. Mayer's).

On this latter movie, they hauled up a strange character by the name of Ayn Rand (a White Guard Russian) who had been shown the picture all over again by the FBI as recently as October 10 and had written a review of it for this session. Then came a hysterical outburst that surprised even these jaded Washingtonians. She flatly contradicted the New York *Times* and *Herald Tribune* reviews that called the film "innocuous," "pleasant." Miss Rand regarded the film as the quintessence of Communist propaganda. She railed at the night-club depicted in the film, at the collective farm, at the tractor on the collective farm, at a modernistic sign on the Soviet border where two Red Guards were quietly playing chess, at the food on the farmer's table, at the wedding ceremony (which showed priests in Russia!) and, what seemed to her the ultimate in perfidy, the telephone on which Mr. Taylor makes a long-distance call. Then, in crescendo, she shouted: "The children are always portrayed smiling, smiling, smiling!" And, with absolute finality, she concluded, "In Russia, children never smile, except *accidentally*."

Robert E. Stripling, the committee investigator, lapped this up; but several of the inquisitors, becoming uneasy at her performance, inquired timidly if she were really certain no children ever smiled in Russia. She was certain.

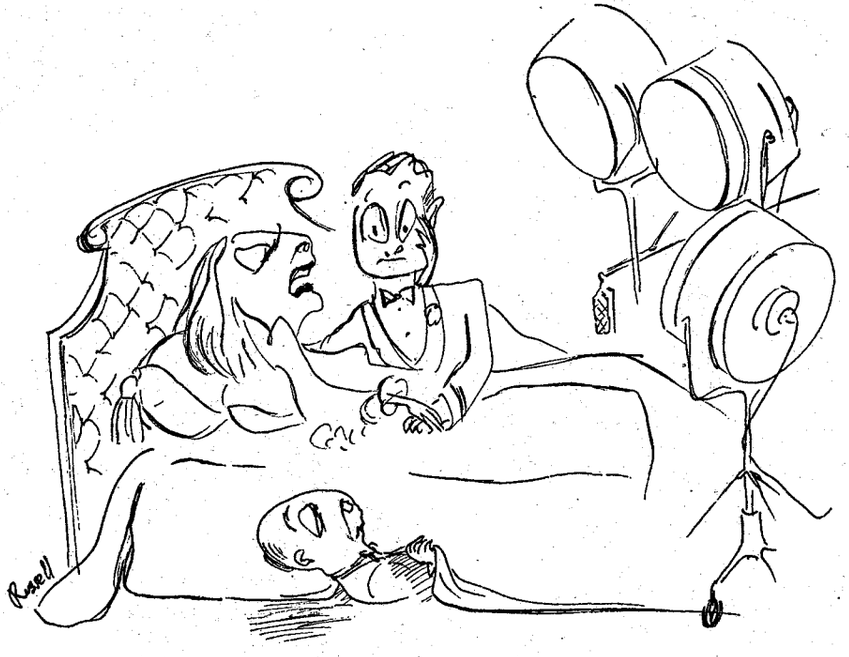
She did her level best to get her point across that America would have been infinitely better off without our Soviet ally, and, she contended, she could prove her point ("even though I am no military expert") if only the committee gave her enough time. The committee did not consent.

It seems to me this must have been the point at which Mr. McNutt came to some conclusions, and announced to the press that the committee sought to censor Hollywood by censure.

However that may be, the best comment on all this came from a taxi driver who asked me how things were going at the hearing. "What's all this about the *Song of Russia*?" he asked. I described the developments. "Listen," he said, "I saw that picture. Why, I still remember it. Why, that could have happened anywhere in the whole wide world. Why, that was only a Boy Meets Girl love story. That was Tschaikowsky's music. Anybody got music in his soul liked that picture for the chance to hear that music. I got music in my soul. What do you mean that's propaganda? And since when is love propaganda? Why, you can roam the wide world over, you can go into deepest Africa, and you will find the people making love," he said fervently. "Do you mean they don't love in Russia?"

All the way to the Press Building he kept muttering: "So now love's propaganda. . . ."

This is the first of two articles. The second will appear next week.



"Hush, my fool, it's only the man from the investigating committee."

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Sweet Mystery of LIFE

Its business is to make the customer take rat for mink, hunger for holiness, and the words "Believe, Obey, Fight" for passwords to glory.

By CHARLES HUMBOLDT

IN THE July 7 issue of *Life* there is a picture-story celebrating Independence Day. One of the captions reads: "There is always a parade and always a band like this one in Anderson, Ind. and many towns call it the Silver Cornet Band. The name Silver Cornet has magic; it means class and is the password to glory. Marching with the Silver Cornet Band a man — any man — becomes really somebody."

A man becomes really somebody. Like a conjurer who never stops mulling over his tricks, *Life* slips a smart thought into the Fourth of July. The idea comes naturally. For the editors of this magazine, which has a reading audience of twenty-six million, are greater masters of illusion than Houdini ever was. It is their business to make their customers take rat for mink, the rate of profit for the voice of God, hunger for holiness, and the words *Believe, Obey, Fight* for passwords to glory. The student of semantics has seen nothing until he watches the antics of language in Henry Luce's editorial vaudeville. And if the student is no dilettante he will note that more than word-play is at stake; issues of life and death for the American people are being tossed into the air, made to vanish and reappear in strange masks and unreal forms.

Stripped of its picture-story coating —the gambling horse of Las Vegas, cat slides down firehouse pole, girl in a glass skirt, etc.—*Life* is as dead serious as its name. Its job is to get us to accept the lowering of our living standards, the curtailment of our civil rights, and our involvement in imperialist adventures which threaten us with extinction. Its target is the American people as a whole, with the middle class as a kind of bull's-eye. It aims to promote the notorious instability of that class by deceiving it on questions of fact, firing its prejudices, corrupting its taste and values, encouraging in it hostility to the working class and distrust of reason and science.

Four major fronts have been chosen for ideological assault: religion and morality; history and politics; labor and economics, with special concentration on the Red-menace sector; and finally foreign affairs, or anti-Sovietism.

Let us watch the operations, one by one.

IN THE last few months, the maneuvers of *Life* in the field of religion and morality have acquired the tempo and frenzy of stock-market trading on the eve of a crash. Here it joins the tragic chorus croaking over the shakiness of "Western civilization as we know it." Presages of panic fill the air, the bell tolls for us all, priests groan from the pulpits, warnings appear in articles and editorials, and there is a continual scramble for shares in some fresh profound idea or other in which no one has any faith. The sanctimonious face of Greed frowns on the human race and bids it be poor for its sins. Vying with cheesecake in the pages of *Life*, the rich man's ascetic, James Burnham, urges us to sacrifice our petty desires for a good life so that America may rule the world—for the world's sake, of course. Editorials exhort us to become "God-intoxicated" like Saint Teresa and T. S. Eliot. Naturally, the smell of decay clings to this suggestion; the romantic Saint-Exupery is quoted as writing, "When the body sinks into death, the essence of man is revealed." With sighs and lamentation the jeweled saints abjure us that only the worst is for the best. Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness? Forget such vanities. Man is evil, helpless, alone, sinful, senseless and mortal. Only in humility before the intangible and mysterious, in bowing to the unknowable, will he find peace. This pious ardor will not abate until all tenants demand higher rents and all workers lower wages.

The preservation of the status quo is, of course, behind the flesh-flogging and the shrieks of chaos. But it would not do to come to so lame a conclusion. The descent into hell must appear as a resurrection, the medieval ideas have to be decked out in supermodern, even "radical" trimmings; superstitions buried by the Renaissance now beat the toscin of a fearless new order willing to face the "fact" of man's hopelessness. Conversely, the intellectual victories of all past revolutionary epochs must be minimized or genteely ridiculed. Because of the efforts of men like Franklin, Paine and Jefferson, the French revolutionist, Saint Just, could exult, "Happiness is a new idea in Europe." But to the historians of *Life*, happiness and progress are simultaneously new-fangled and old-fashioned notions. "This idea [of progress] is only about as old as modern science, stemming from Bacon and Descartes. But it has as firm a grip on the modern world as the expectation of Judgment Day had on the medieval world. And except among the Russian Communists (for Marx swallowed it whole) the idea of progress has nowhere taken deeper root than in America." What must Americans do to absolve themselves of this heresy? No less than to "virtually reverse two of their dearest values; on the one hand, we must recover our sense of awareness of evil, uncertainty and fear; on the other, we must gain a sense of man's occasional greatness (which is quite a different thing from the 'dignity of the common man.')"

Briefly, the democratic and humanistic ideas which heralded the founding of our nation and which have so honorable a place in progressive tradition must be discarded. This message of comfort is delivered in hundreds of shapes and unexpected places. Thus, in an editorial on US soil we are

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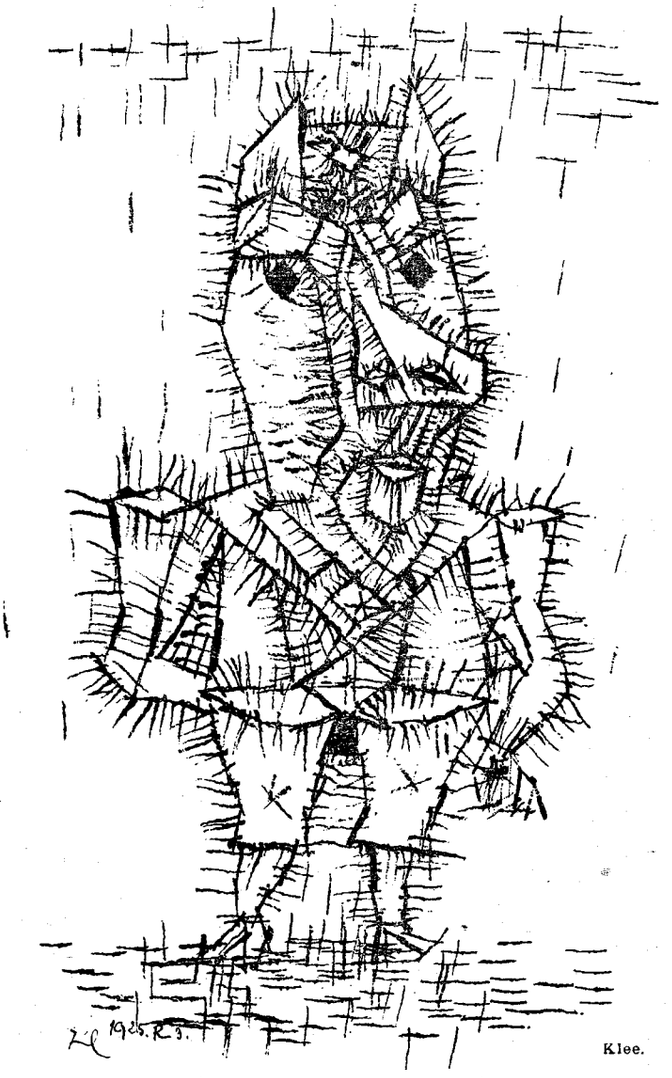
abjured to "remember, if we can, that never disproved observation, 'All men are grass.' (Isaiah 40:6)." It is no wonder that an exasperated reader finally wrote to protest against "your particular type of self-righteous hokum."

BUT it is not enough to berate progress. The peculiar radiant pessimism of *Life* requires more positive assertions. So we find its issues studded with appeals to religion in which complacency alternates with hysteria. This dual tone is apparent in the March 10 article by Paul Hutchinson, managing editor of *The Christian Century*. Asserting that man is turning to a spiritual interpretation of life, Dr. Hutchinson is forced to admit that "the churches are less and less able to command the active loyalty of the masses." Since his article is entitled "Religion Around the World," one may assume that the assertion is on the side of wish-fulfillment while the admission stems from accurate observation of events on the European continent. This is borne out by Dr. Hutchinson's sudden and categorical warning that "The inescapable challenge which beyond all others confronts the world of faith today rises out of communism." We are then treated to a description of the latter which sounds like some medieval account of the Black Mass. Communism, we learn, has "its sacred scriptures, its inspired revelators, its dogmas, its saints, its martyrs, its demonology, its ruling hierarchy, its pope, its consecrated priesthood." Communists are even inspired by a concern for human salvation "that can hardly be understood except as the oblation of a religious zealot." Note how, paradoxically, the figures and props of organized religion are dragged out to discredit a challenging system of thought. It seems, too, that no one but Dr. Hutchinson's side is entitled to call its tortured and broken heroes by the name of martyr, and that when a man believes in ending the oppression of man on earth rather than in Paradise he forthwith becomes a zealot.

Then at the very end of Dr. Hutchinson's piece we are slipped a pill that seems specially concocted in the *Life* pharmacy. "Contemplating the fate of Western Europe from the Vatican today, Pius XII must feel in an advanced and beleaguered citadel. After all, Trieste is hardly more than an hour's bomber flight from Vatican City." Now this is not a lie: you cannot disprove it. No, it is something more contemptible. It is a device to arouse the most violent feelings in people without accepting any responsibility for the consequences. The insinuation is perfidious, but the one who hints is innocent. So he thinks. The reader can judge.



"We must recover our sense of awareness of evil, uncertainty and fear."

The Pope is not the only Christian institution which is in trouble. On March 24 we learn that the Family in Western Civilization is seriously threatened and needs material and moral help. This is an interesting admission, for we had been taught some months before by Mrs. Clare Boothe Luce, wife of *Life's* editor-in-chief, that *communism* and family life were incompatible. (N. Y. *Herald Tribune*, Nov. 24, 1946.) *Life's* remedy for the alarming divorce rate—one divorce for every three marriages—is fascinating. It is to provide every citizen with "a Christian conscience and a Christian heart," somewhat as one used to provide that favorite character of *Life's*, the feudal knight, with a suit of armor. It refers approvingly to Catholic canon law which is "inflexibly fixed on just eleven words of Jesus Christ: 'What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,'" and suggests that good Protestants formulate a similar doctrine. The "material help" which the family needs has disappeared into the magician's handkerchief. Indeed there is nowhere any attempt to discuss the material cricumstances of capitalist society which are responsible for the dissolution of family ties (though it is naive to expect that); the editorial is simply a clear bid for the support of the Catholic hierarchy by advertising one of its most socially backward and tyrannous interdictions.

ON APRIL 7, however, *Life* comes out of its state of funk over the spiritual condition of the Western world. It announces that materialism

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and science worship are in full retreat, "eminent scientists leading the chase." It then proceeds to chide those who feel that religion is the brotherhood of **man**. Jesus, we are lectured, speaks of the Fatherhood of God "three times as often." Christianity "asks us to sell all we have, to renounce the world, to lose life itself." At this point the traveler looks around and asks, "Is the guide crazy?" He sees an ad for DuBarry Foundation Lotion (*Who is she*, this exciting woman whose look is so naturally fresh?); a feature story on mink coats for dogs; pictures of high-jinks in a retired banker's thirty-two-room house; an ad for the 1947 Mercury (more of everything you want. Like a champion show dog, or thoroughbred horse, etc., etc.). And all the while he hears a solemn voice telling him to throw all this to the winds and seek immortality. Whom, ah whom, is he to believe? Can *Life* really afford to run those tempting ads which might lure the reader to destruction?

The attack on science is resumed in an editorial titled "Science: A Mystery Story." Here the gaps in scientific knowledge are used to discredit the effort to predict and control natural phenomena. Deviations from statistical norms are pointed to derisively, and the reader is expected to throw causality out of the window in deference to these "miracles." The physicist is said to deal in abstractions (though the editorial admits that "his abstractions have split the atom"—some abstractions they are!) and has thereby left the real world behind. The argument goes on to a stinging rebuke to the psychologists and sociologists for not referring their problems to God (quoting the Hitlerite, Jung, on the subject), and ends up with a paean to "reverence and faith."

The fatuous tone of this piece and its multitude of boners—to be charitable—got such a response from scientific workers that *Life* had to publish a few of the letters of rebuttal. Among these was one from Philip Wylie, who pointed out that the meaning of the quantum theory had been misrepresented to give a metaphysical slant to the uncertainty principle, despite the fact that "quantum mathematicians have tried to explain the nature of their logic in such a fashion as to stop philosophers and theologians from making *Life's* blunder on the subject." Mr. Wylie also objected to the "oozing of dogma from the religious departments to overspread even the news."

The science editorial is another example of *Life's* sleight-of-hand. The relativity of knowledge, which scientists take for granted, is supposed to confound them, driving them into the arms of the church. Every unexplained phenomenon is dubbed a "miracle" which defies reason. This kind of philosophizing can produce rather dubious results, since the history of science then appears as the progressive reduction of "miracles" to measurable and predictable events. The tentative character of our present insights into the nature of the world is no original discovery of religious thinkers. It was Engels, a materialist, who said "the generations which will put *us* right are likely to be far more numerous than those whose knowledge we—often enough with a considerable degree of contempt—are in a position to correct." The contempt to which Engels refers is nicely exemplified by *Life*, which sneers at the scientific knowledge which we do have in order to sell its exclusive brand of Revelation as "the only source of values man is sure of." We may well ask, why should we exchange the hard-won discoveries of Curie, Einstein and thousands of other serious investigators for eternal truths unveiled with no effort at all—by a tap of the typewriter, in fact—at 9 Rockefeller Plaza?

Superficially it might seem that this anti-scientific tirade is delivered to promote religious belief. Quite the contrary; religious belief is to serve as the instrument of obscurantism. The editorial's sudden switch to an assault on psychology and sociology (recalling Msgr. Fulton Sheen's sermon on psychoanalysis) gives the game away. Neither the causes of human suffering nor their remedies are to be sought for on the mundane plane, lest the instructive effects of capitalism on human relations and on the individual be revealed. The findings of even those scientists who proceed from the assumption that this is the best of all possible societies must be underplayed. Being scientists, they might, like Candide, still discover a thing or two wrong and think of how to correct it. And they might feel that pie in the sky is a not quite adequate solution. Monopoly capitalism is the particular enemy of the social sciences, save when they directly and slavishly serve its purposes, as in the racial theories of the Nazi "anthropologists," or in the propaganda for the elite of Dr. Alexis Carrel. It is only natural that *Life*, one of the chief organs of monopoly capitalism, should express this enmity, though in the most sanctimonious tones.

(*This is the first of three articles. The second will appear next week.*)

portside patter

By BILL RICHARDS

News Item: Well-known character-actor exposes the secret operations and activities of Communists in Hollywood.

Mr. Gumshou took the stand, nattily attired in three-quarter-length corduroy trousers, blue silk sweatshirt and light tan sneakers. Chain-smoking as he talked, Gumshou testified that he had made a thorough study of all "isms," including Marxism, Exhibitionism and Alcoholism. It was his firm belief that even the elephants in Hollywood were slightly pink.

Asked to identify the Communists in Hollywood, Mr. Gumshou named thirty people. "All the others are Reds or friends of Reds," he said. "I have taken the lead in educating people to the menace of communism," he continued. "Many of my acquaintances in Hollywood have said that after talking to me for five minutes they saw red." At this point he lit a fresh pack of cigarettes.

Gumshou maintained that he heard Communists plotting openly in the film capital. "I've listened to dozens of writers and directors boast that they were making completely revolutionary pictures. I have personally turned down many scripts tainted with radical propaganda. I refuse to play any role where I'm portrayed as making less than $25,000 a year."

The witness also charged that many actresses were being used as fronts and usually have the best parts in pictures. As he finished his testimony Mr. Gumshou stated that "anybody who thinks the hearings are an attempt at censorship hasn't the integrity of a louse." As Mr. Gumshou left the stand and made his way through the crowd there was furious applause and scratching.

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Culture and Anti-Semitism

A great task calls for great works—books, paintings, plays, films, song; new images, new symbols, new creators.

By MORRIS SCHAPPES

THE affirmation of democracy today begins with the affirmation of the people, in their diversity and in their unity. In our country particularly to say "the people, yes," is to affirm all the national group components of the people, especially of the working class. Such affirmation takes its start from the recognition of the diverse national origin and present national group consciousness and character of the American masses. As democrats, we then move from recognition to respect; as progressives, from respect to concern; as cultural workers, from concern to artistic treatment in all the forms of which we are, or would be, the masters.

The academics have begun to speak in terms of cultural pluralism versus cultural monism. To us the issue is cultural democracy versus cultural monopoly. Anglo-Saxon domination in culture is an ugly facet of the ugly polyhedron of would-be Anglo-American imperialist domination of the wide world. We are opposed to every facet and proclaim the imperialist core of the structure. This is part of the fight for cultural freedom. Randolph Bourne in 1920 saw the issue thus: "If freedom means a democratic cooperation in determining the ideals and purposes and industrial and social institutions of a country, then the immigrant has not been free, and the Anglo-Saxon element is guilty of just what every dominant race is guilty of in every European country, the imposition of its own culture upon the minority peoples." (*The History of a Literary Radical.*) Since 1920, some progress has been made, both real and superficial, in the facing of this issue of freedom. The foaming rabidity with which reaction strives to maintain its position is in fact an index to the strength being shown by the progressive forces in rising to the challenge by the affirmation of cultural democracy.

A specially potent weapon in the arsenal of reaction is anti-Semitism. The rulers of our country have fostered many hostilities in addition to the main one against the Negro. Feelings against Irish-Americans, German-Americans, Italian-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Polish and other Slav-Americans, Mexican-Americans and many other kinds of Americans have been bred and cultivated. Each and all of these hostilities are dangers to American democracy. But none is the great national menace that anti-Semitism is today. We should neglect none of them; we should stress anti-Semitism.

For many centuries, under varying social systems—pre-feudal, feudal and capitalist—the ruling classes have used anti-Semitism as a means of maintaining their power. They have caused their auxiliaries in their cultural institutions—religious and secular—to stamp upon the consciousness of millions vile images and hateful symbols of the Jew. A proper name becomes a common noun, and the word "shylock" spread its venom from lip to lip and is formally defined in the best dictionaries. The noun "Jew" becomes a verb, but with a difference: while "to Americanize" means "to make American" and to Anglicize means "to make English," the verb "to Jew" has been made to mean—as the language of the gutter and even the dictionary will testify—something else than "to make Jewish."

WHEN the New World was born in struggle against the Old World, a heritage of anti-Semitism, as well as the need to fight it, was transmitted in the process. From the earliest colonial days anti-Semitism was a weapon of the reaction, and the struggle against it was the sign of the consistent democrat. So long as our country was the most advanced democracy in the world, the victories against the anti-Semites were repeated and outstanding and were an example to the world. But now that our ruling class has converted the United States into an imperialist power whose main article of export is reaction, forced upon hungry but unwilling customers at the point of the gun and the dollar, these victories of equal rights for Jews, never completely secured, are in danger. With imperialism and the drive toward fascism, the struggle against anti-Semitism enters a new phase. The struggle will be ended only under socialism. But not only will the democratic advance to socialism be impossible of attainment but the defense of bourgeois-democracy will not be successful without waging war against anti-Semitism.

What is at stake is not only the survival of the Jewish people but the survival of democracy itself. They will live or die together. We have no choice in the matter. We stand for life.

To be democratic is to include the fight against anti-Semitism as part of the defense against reaction. The arenas of struggle are political, social and cultural. We see the political relation between the Truman Doctrine abroad and the Hartley-Taft Act here. We affirm the connection also of the Wagner-Morse anti-lynch bill (S. 1352) and the Buckley bill to outlaw anti-Semitism (H.R. 2848). If we have lagged on the political front, the cultural lag is still greater, and is one contributing factor in the political lag.

It is time that progressive cultural workers proclaimed with new vigor the moral degeneracy not only of anti-Semitism but of indifference to anti-Semitic manifestations. In 1916, when Maxim Gorky, Leonid Andreyev and Fyodor Sologub were editing *The Shield* in Petrograd as the organ of the Russian Society for the Study of Jewish Life, Gorky wrote: "The Jew of today is dear to me, and I feel myself guilty before him, for I am one of those who tolerate the oppression of the Jewish nation. . . ." Gorky's feeling guilty can be an arousing lesson. How much Gorky had already done to fight the anti-Semites! He had denounced the Kishinev pogrom in 1903. One of his few lectures in the United States was delivered in 1906 in New York on "The Jewish Question." When Mendel Beilis was being framed in 1913 on the blood-ritual charge, Gorky spoke up. Yet he felt guilty of tolerating anti-Semitism, but by confessing his feeling he stirred others to action too. This was in Czarist times, when Hitler was still a corporal.

In 1936, when a reactionary Polish government was encouraging the anti-Semites, Romain Rolland sent a letter

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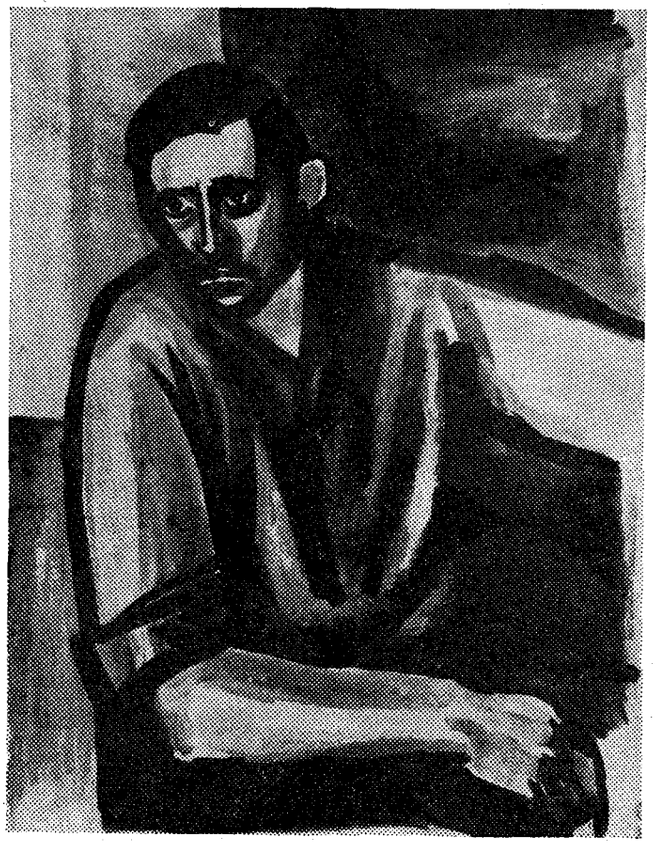
to a Warsaw magazine. "I really regret that I am not a Jew," he wrote, "for I am ashamed of my brother Christians." The Nazis had not yet annihilated 6,000,000 Jews.

American progressive cultural workers have also on occasion talked up on particular instances of anti-Semitism. But should we not consider: are occasional statements the way in which cultural creators can best contribute to the struggle? Here is the publication of the League of American Writers in 1939, "We Hold These Truths . . ." with statements on anti-Semitism by leading American writers, educators and other public figures. I reread the statements of Louis Bromfield, Margaret Culkin Banning, William Rose Benet, Theodore Dreiser, Langston Hughes, Rockwell Kent, John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, Upton Sinclair, Donald Ogden Stewart and Genevieve Taggard. They are generally fine, sincere, democratic statements. But where are the novels, plays, stories, songs, paintings and moving pictures dealing in a major way with anti-Semitism and with Jews? The American people need more than statements from their cultural leaders. The people need the works of art themselves that will touch them and teach them, deeply. But can we think of more than a couple of novels, a couple of plays, a couple of stories, and a couple of radio scripts—and all of them by Jews?

Can we not hear America crying, and the Jewish people in America calling: give us the image, the figure, the name that will work fascination upon the minds of millions and move through history until it too becomes a word in the dictionary, spelled without a capital letter, that will rival and replace the malign noun, "shylock," and the malevolent verb, "to jew," rival and replace them on the page and in the hearts of Americans? Let loose the tide of song, poem, story, film and dance that will inundate the evil images of anti-Semitism!



"Tired Man," painting by Walter Iler. At the 44th Street Gallery through November 14.

The dignity of a people is at issue. The enemies of all progressive mankind, the antagonists of freedom and equality everywhere, have tried to reduce us Jews to contemptibility. They sought to strip the immigrant Jew of his language and mocked his vernacular by calling it a jargon; they ignored his history and derided his pride in his people. The literature of the Jews is rich in self-critical humor, but we resent being called, and deny that we are represented by, Potash and Perlmutter or Mrs. Nussbaum, any more than Stepin Fetchit or Aunt Jemima are the proper names for the Negro people. We would be represented by other and better types. Only the cultural workers, the historians, the writers, the composers, the graphic artists can furnish these new names to the American people and make them memorable.

For the Jewish progressive cultural creators there is also this problem: their relationship to the Jewish people. Who shall be the cultural leaders of the American Jewish community? Shall they be the Ben Hechts and Sidney Hooks and Will Herbergs? Only ruin and confusion can come upon the Jewish people from such leadership, and the American people as a whole are bound to suffer from it too. If the best, most class-conscious, most clear-visioned sons and daughters of the Jewish people abandon their people, what will be left and whom will they follow? Individuals have resigned from their people, but the Jewish people cannot resign; such resignation means extermination, and the inferno of the gas-ovens is more real than Dante's.

Democracy cannot mean turning the back; it must mean facing the issue. Identification with the people is a necessity to guarantee the quality of that people. There are those Jews who seem to act upon the feeling that nothing human is alien to them—with the possible exception of the Jews. We Marxists and progressives declare our stand in favor of identification with the mass and in opposition to separation from it. Know your people, we say, and become a part of it. We will gain in scope, and not lose. That is a narrow vision which sees all American and overlooks that part of America which is the national group in which we were born and reared. This is no call for separation from anything progressive. It is a call for the expanding of the progressive identity.

The relation of the Jew to the non-Jew is a crucial issue in Jewish life, whether in Palestine, Poland, Biro-Bidjan or the United States. We stand for full progressive cooperation in the fight against reaction and in the creation of a better life. We oppose separation of one people from other peoples as we oppose the separation of the individual from the people. Survival and progress depend on unity: unity of the people itself, unity between the people and its neighbors. I found a symbol of this in "The Ghetto in Minsk," by H. Smoliar, recently serialized in the Yiddish *Morning Freiheit*. This survivor of the concentration camp and the ghetto describes movingly how stunned were the Jews in the Nazi concentration camp when the order came through to sort them out from the Byelo-Russians in the camp. They did not know what to do. The idea of resistance had not yet developed. But when some of the Byelo-Russians began to outwit the Nazis as best they could by claiming some Jews as non-Jews, the success attained here gave birth to the idea of resistance. The socialist practice of the brotherhood of

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peoples, manifesting itself in this instance in this way, fired the will to resist of the Jews themselves in Minsk. Survival came out of unity, not separation.

How shall progressive Jewish American cultural workers go about their task? There are no ready, easy answers. It is our common duty to find the answers. If we look and strive, we shall find them. Out of ignorance, out of scoffing, out of a desire for separation, out of denial no solution can come. Out of knowledge, out of respect, out of identification, out of affirmation solutions will come. If we know our people, their life, their pain, their hope, we will want to write about them, sing of them, paint them and mold them, set them in motion on stage and screen. It was a Jew who gave us the words that make Jew and non-Jew see Joe Hill in their dreams, but the songs of our Jewish working-class heroes are unwritten and we dream not of them. Who will write them, if not we, the American Jews for whom these workers, our fathers and mothers, fought and fight?

We cannot lack for themes or inspiration. Our history in this country extends back for three centuries, and there is a great progressive trend in all of it. For some seventy-five years, Jewish workers in this country have been making history for themselves and for the entire American labor movement. It is a history of mass movements, great struggles, cultural achievements and heroes, but so far it has been unchronicled, unsung and unpainted. There is the present life of the American Jews waiting for honest, progressive, extensive recreation.

There are the great new themes furnished by the Jews of other countries, of the war and the ghettoes and the resistance and the present reconstruction. A world of new problems, of human relations, was born of the resistance in the ghettoes and the Partisan movements, problems beginning with whether to resist, and extending to when and how. There, written large and luridly visible in the flare of the open door of the crematorium are themes enough for a generation of cultural workers, and our generation will not exhaust them.

The material is there, the need is there, the talents are here. Shall we wed them, and strengthen the Jewish people and all progressive America by the union?

A beginning has been made, in a little way. (Beginnings are always, it would seem, small, even though impatience is naturally great.) On *Jewish Life* we have begun to explore for answers. We shall fight to grow. We on the editorial board bring only the clarity of students of Marxism, the authority of devotion, the definitiveness that rises from whatever conviction and light our readers find in our pages. Let us join our forces to create new images, new symbols, new models for the Jewish people and for the entire nation. Let us declare war on the dominance of the anti-Semitic myths in American culture. Let those of us who are Jews assume our responsibility to try to become the cultural leaders and servants of the Jewish people, bringing them into unshakable alliance with all progressive mankind. There is no other road to progress and survival for all.

Mr. Schappes is an editor of "Jewish Life" and one of the sponsors of a national Jewish cultural conference to be held in New York over the week-end of October 31. All cultural, fraternal and labor organizations have been invited to participate. Full details can be obtained from the organizing committee at 189 Second Ave., New York 3, N. Y.

MAN OF RECORD

Disc Jockey Robbins is really straight, gate. Lock, stock and barrelhouse — but don't ask for Uncle Tom.

By VIVIAN HOWARD

Fred Robbins, the jive-talking disc jockey of Station WOV, New York, is perhaps the only record-turner in radio who created a sensation among his listeners by *not* playing a requested record.

The recording was Phil Harris' "Dark Town Poker Club." When he began receiving requests for this number, Fred informed his audience that he didn't play "that kind of junk." "There'll be no Uncle Tom records on the 1280 Club," he announced. (1280 is WOV's number on the dial.)

After the broadcast, the letters and telegrams started coming in from those cats who were not only hep to the jive but also to issues of racial discrimination. They applauded Fred for battling the minstrel tradition of presenting Negroes in stereotype. As one all-out listener put it, "A few more people like you on the American radio and I won't have to worry about keeping my GI uniform for future duty."

That isn't the only time that Fred has taken a stand for Negro rights during his two years of disc jockeying on WOV. On various occasions he has asked his listeners to send him a "hunk of linen" protesting against hoodlum attacks on Negro musicians in Greenwich Village. He publicized the case of Isaac Woodard, plugged for better housing for Negro veterans and denounced the DAR for their refusal to permit Negro artists to perform in Constitution Hall.

What's more important, Fred's "1280 Club" is one of the few radio programs which give Negro musicians their just due as artists. As Fred put it, you can't devote a radio show to good jazz without featuring the great Negro artists who have helped make American jazz, from Louis Armstrong to Duke Ellington to Dizzy Gillespie. Fred said, "I never consider that after playing, say, four or five records by Negro musicians, I ought to stick in a 'white' record. I play jazz, regardless of the color of people's skins."

On Fred's weekly "Guest in the Nest" and "Collectors' Corner" programs he has interviewed nearly every prominent jazz musician, both Negro

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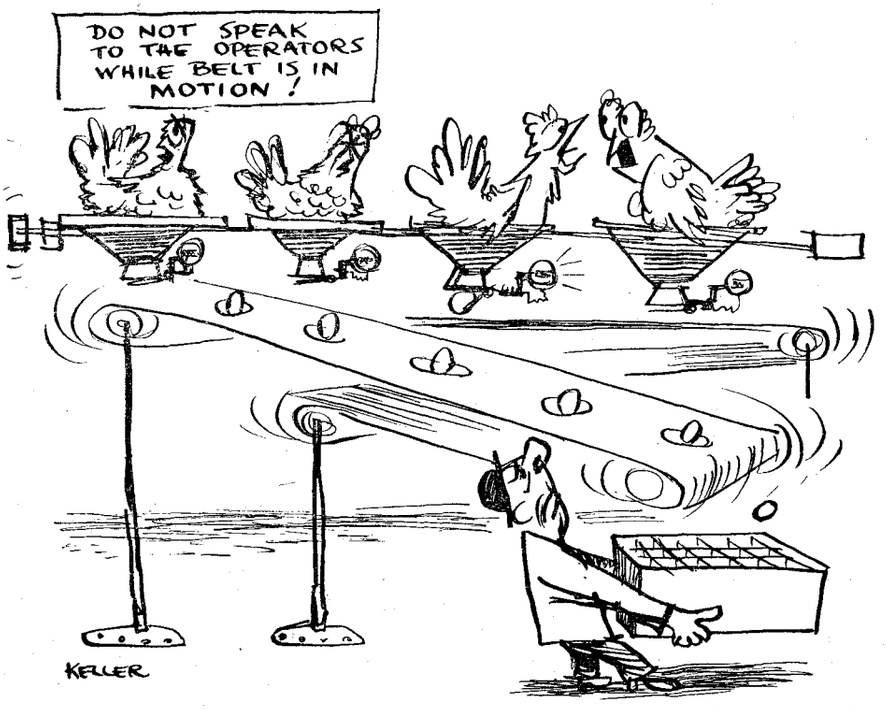
and white, movie and stage stars, jazz enthusiasts and lots of people who just wanted to get into the act. He likes to get an argument started among his guest experts on such points of controversy as "Dixieland *vs.* be-bop," and sit back to watch the fur fly.

The Professor of Thermodynamics, as Fred likes to call himself, was born in Baltimore twenty-nine years ago. He became an announcer on a local radio station and developed a show called "Some Like It Hot" which alternated the solid stuff with Fred's own "spectacular vernacular." Later he came to New York, where he free-lanced and emceed Eddie Condon's jazz concerts before taking over the 1280 Club, formerly conducted by Alan Courtney.

Fred is good-looking, with wavy brown hair and blue eyes and a disarming personality. Over the air he sometimes gives the effect of talking to himself. He also sings and in the midst of disc jockeying will give out with a few vocals every once in a while to keep in practice.

When Fred took over Courtney's job, some of the fans were afraid that he would spoil the program by including such unhep commercial bands as Vaughn Monroe or (horrors!) Guy Lombardo. One anxious 1280 Club member wrote that he was so grieved about Courtney's leaving that he didn't listen to the program for two whole days. However, he couldn't stand the suspense any longer than that and tuned in to catch Fred. Grudgingly he admitted that the new prexy of the club was in the groove. A couple of months later the same fan wrote again to apologize for ever having had misgivings about Fred. He not only approved of the "cookies" that the Professor was playing but liked his stand on racial issues.

FRED's jive talk is fast and furious, if slightly baffling to those who do not know that a record is a "drastic plastic." By way of introduction, he is apt to chant, "Greetings, mate, got your head on straight? Well, it's kicks we need, mate; so let's percolate." And one of his favorite station breaks goes something like this: "You've copped yourself a corner suite in the 1280 Club, a tumbledown shack built way back twenty-five feet from the railroad track. Fred Robbins has taken over the joint, lock, stock and barrel-house, and you're nabbin' his blabbin' and doing nice things to your ear, dear. This peanut whistle is WOV, New York, and the borscht is on records."



"The trouble with this country is there's no time for craftsmanship any more."

The 1280 Club is an informal collection of jazz fans and WOV listeners. Members receive birthday cards, greetings on the air and free records or tickets to jazz concerts. Membership has passed the 50,000 mark and is now closed, since that number is about all Fred and his secretary can handle. On "Juke Box Saturday Nights" Fred plays request numbers from members (except, of course, requests for "Dark Town Poker Club"). Other weekly features of the program are "Blue Monday," "Solo Flight," "Digging the Boogie" and "Old Masters," where Fred treats his listeners with hard-to-find recordings of Bix Beidercke, Bessie Smith and other old-time greats.

One of Fred's current enthusiasms is Nellie Lutcher, the new singer at Cafe Society Downtown. Nellie's "Hurry on Down," a lusty song done in a highly original manner, is, as Fred claims, real gone (wonderful), and he's been wearing out WOV's needles and his supply of adjectives on it.

For an hour or so before his nightly broadcast Fred sits in his office at WOV, reads his mail and answers calls. The phone rings constantly. A publicity man wants to know why he hasn't played the Number One Hit Parade item. "Because it's junk," Fred answers severely. "I wouldn't play 'Near You' any more than I'd play Sammy Kaye."

A record shop phones to beg Fred for permission to give away free records to 1280 Club members. Fred tells them that he will put them on his waiting list. The phone rings again, and it is a guest star who would like to appear on Friday. "I'm all filled up on Friday," Fred says gently. "I have John Garfield and Turhan Bey." Someone else gets him involved in a long conversation about a new small jazz band. "What you need is a good alto sax," Fred advises. A station executive rushes in to argue with Fred about the way he presented a commercial the night before. "We only received seven replies, and we should have gotten seventy. Do it the sponsor's way next time," the exec pleads. "All right," Fred agrees, dismissing the subject. He treats his commercials lightheartedly and, whenever possible, gives his guests the job of reading them.

IN BETWEEN phone calls he was ready to answer questions. What's behind the current craze for disc jockeys? Fred's answer to that was a brief summary of disc jockeying with diplomatic references to his fellow platter-spinners. In every small station an announcer has to play records and make up some sort of chatter about them. Martin Block with his "Make Believe Ballroom" was one

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of the first to receive big popularity. Then Andre Baruch and Bea Wain entered the field, followed by Ted Husing, Paul Whiteman, Tommy Dorsey. Now there are so many disc jockeys that they have organized themselves into a National Association of Disc Jockeys. WQXR, a strictly longhair station, even has a classical jockey, Jacques Fray, who delivers his patter with clipped British accent between records of Beethoven and Bach. Fred believes that the disc jockeys who began primarily as radio entertainers will be more successful than the big name band leaders who have entered the field.

Are the 1280 Club members mostly bobby-soxers? Fred answered no, the average age of his listeners is twenty-three, and they are people from all occupations—including a minister or two.

Fred's listeners are loyal. They write in to apologize for tuning him out in order to hear Frankie Sinatra on another station. One Robbins fan who found himself disconsolately in the Virgin Islands spent evenings tinkering with his radio set until finally, one momentous night, he was able to get WOV. "I literally went wild," this fan wrote. "My friends couldn't understand what made me so hysterical until I let them dig some of that fine music that you play." Another lost soul in Nova Scotia wrote in bemoaning the fact that he was literally surrounded by squares, being the only jazz devotee in town. No worse fate can befall a 1280 Club member.

Whether you're a member or not it is refreshing to tune in WOV and find one radio entertainer who isn't scared to death to express some liberal ideas over the air. Fred says what he wants to say, just as he plays the records he thinks are worthwhile. It is gratifying to hear Negro and white guest stars appear together on equal terms in an industry which has usually relegated Negro actors to the role of "Rochesters" and practically shut its eyes to the existence of Negro musicians. (According to Robbins there are only two Negroes employed in studio orchestras in all of New York City's radio stations.)

Fred keeps together in a file marked "Tolerance" the many letters he receives from fans praising his stand on racial issues. It may be an unusual subject matter for a disc jockey's fan mail, but not for a professor of thermodynamics.

NEW ROADS TO SOCIALISM: II

An important theoretical question arises: Is Soviet power the only possible form for working-class rule?

By EUGENE VARGA

(This is the second of two articles on Eastern Europe's new democracies.)

ALTHOUGH the same social order exists in all the countries of a democracy of a new type, there are differences of no little importance, conditioned historically in both economy and policy.

This applies particularly to the national policy of the states under review. It might seem that in this sphere a sharp contradiction exists between the policy of Yugoslavia, on the one hand, and that of Czechoslovakia and Poland on the other (Bulgaria is almost united as regards its national composition). Czechoslovakia and Poland expelled to Germany almost all the Germans who previously lived on the present territory of their countries. In Yugoslavia all nations have equal rights and it is a federation of various nationalities. This contradiction, however, is only a seeming contradiction. In Yugoslavia it is a question of nations which (torn from their common Slav nationality) were oppressed by the Germans and fought against the invaders. During the war they belonged to one camp.

At the same time the Germans in the Sudeten region and Poland were a tool of Hitler fascism even before the war. They openly betrayed the country of which they were citizens. During the world war they fought on the side of Hitler against their motherland. It is comprehensible that, with this experience in mind, the Czechoslovak and Polish peoples have no desire to expose themselves to a possible danger by keeping these treacherous elements in their countries. The complete equality of rights of Slovaks and Czechs in Czechoslovakia clearly demonstrates the nature of its national policy, based on historical experience.

On the completion of the expulsion of Germans and the voluntary migration of Ukrainians from Poland to the Soviet Union (and Poles from the Soviet Union to Poland) the national composition of the states of the new democracy will be as follows: Bulgaria and Poland will be almost completely homogeneous as regards national composition. Czechoslovakia will consist of two nations with equal rights (probably with a Hungarian minority, which the population unwillingly accepts). Yugoslavia, on the other hand, is a federation of equal nations. This national policy of the new Yugoslavia is particularly important for the prosperity of the country and friendship among the peoples living on its territory, because its prewar regime left behind an extremely unfavorable heritage in this respect. Although the country was called Yugoslavia, *i.e.*, the land of southern Slavs, it was the Serbian bourgeoisie which exercised actual domination and oppressed the other peoples. Precisely for this reason everything which in the slightest degree could be interpreted to mean a continuation of the prewar Serbian policy of oppression was deleted from the constitution and practice of the new Yugoslavia.

There remains in Yugoslavia a small German (and Magyar) minority. Since Yugoslavia has no common frontier with Germany, and its regime is politically extremely stable, it can, unlike Czechoslovakia and Poland, safely leave this minority in its country.

ALL the states of democracy of a new type are people's republics: the working people determine the policy of the government. The form which the political rule of the workers takes is not, however, the same in each

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case. Czechoslovakia, Poland and Bulgaria are parliamentary republics with universal, equal and secret electoral rights. The governments in these countries are made up of coalition parties forming a majority and are responsible to parliament. Their electoral rights differ from the suffrage in the old bourgeois democracies, in that fascist parties are not allowed to operate and fascist traitors have no electoral rights. At the same time Yugoslavia is a federative republic, its constitution being similar in many ways to that of the Soviet Union.

In this connection an important theoretical question arises: the idea was widely held in the Communist parties that the political domination of the working people, as is the case in the Soviet Union, could only be realized in the form of Soviet power. This is not correct, nor is it an expression of Lenin's opinion.

In my book on the Hungarian Soviet republic, *Economic-political Problems of Proletarian Dictatorship*, published in 1920, I wrote the following phrase: "The hostility of the prosperous peasants and all strata of the ruling classes towards the proletarian state does not depend on the form the latter takes: whether this system is Soviet, a government of trade unions or a parliament with a Labor majority—this is all the same to the ruling classes. They will offer equally strong resistance to whatever form is assumed, once serious steps are taken to build up socialist economy."

This phrase which allows of the possibility of other forms of political rule by the working people was regarded by a number of comrades as incorrect. Lenin, however, who made sharp notes of criticism in the margins of some pages of my book, made no remarks at all concerning the phrase quoted above, but merely underlined part of it (see *Lenin Symposium*, Vol. VII, p. 371, Russ. Ed.).

The rise of the new democracies shows clearly that it is possible to have political rule by the working people even while the forms of bourgeois parliamentary democracy are still maintained.

The foreign policy of the states of new democracy is determined by the transitional character of their social order. It is owing to their social order that the capitalist states, primarily the United States of America and Britain, do everything in their power not only to hinder the progressive social development of these countries but to throw them back and once more convert them into ordinary capitalist states. This effort becomes all the stronger on account of the fact that the present state system of these countries excludes the possibility of their once more becoming economically dependent countries as they were before the war in relation to Germany. It is this which explains facts in the daily press which are all too well known to the reader: the repeated attempts at interference in the internal affairs of these countries, the hullabaloo about the absence of democracy because reactionary plotting is severely dealt with, attempts to discredit the elections, support of every display of opposition, *i.e.*, of all reactionary (in the present historical situation) and objectively counter-revolutionary parties and politicians, etc.

The intensity of these attempts at interference differs in relation to the different countries. It is relatively weak in relation to Czechoslovakia, because the bourgeoisie there are so discredited by their collaboration with the German fascists that they cannot, at least for the present, act openly as a political force and foreign reaction is deprived, therefore, of internal support. The democratic character of Czechoslovakia, therefore, cannot be disputed. In Poland, where Mikolajczyk's Peasant Party serves as the chief legal center of reactionary forces inside the country and a bulwark for

foreign reaction, attempts at interference assume the most intense character. One of the chief tasks of the foreign policy of these countries, therefore, is to protect their political conquests at home and their new social system from all these attacks.

IT CAN be understood from these circumstances why the states mentioned maintain the closest friendly relations among themselves and render each other economic and political aid. Of the states mentioned, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, on the one hand, and Czechoslovakia and Poland on the other, have common frontiers which facilitate their economic ties. (There are two countries—Hungary and Rumania—between these two groups of states, which, although at the present time not among the new democracies, are clearly developing in this direction).

It is equally understandable that these countries maintain close, friendly relations with the Soviet Union. This is so not only because it was the troops of the Soviet Union that liberated their countries (Yugoslavia being, in part, an exception), and not only because they are all Slav states, but primarily because the present social order brings them close to the Soviet Union, because of all the great powers the Soviet Union alone is interested in the maintenance and further progressive development of the social order and political regime existing in these countries and can afford them diplomatic support against the reactionary offensive from outside.

The Soviet Union is at the same time interested in the maintenance by these countries of the existing regime and their further development in a progressive direction. The present regime in these countries provides the guarantee that they will not, in the future, again voluntarily serve as a *place d'armes* for any power which tries to attack the Soviet Union. For this reason the Soviet Union is interested in these states being as strong as possible in the economic, political and military sense, in order that they may defend themselves against foreign attack at least until such time as the Soviet armies can come to their aid and so avert their forcible conversion into a military *place d'armes* against the Soviet Union, as happened during the Second World War.

This situation signifies that the new states are the junction of the postwar struggle of two systems. It was not for nothing that during the war Churchill frequently called for the opening of a Second Front in the Balkans instead of a genuine Second Front in the West, in order that, by the end of the war, British armed forces would be on the spot to safeguard the old order. But these proposals were rejected by Roosevelt and Stalin as being incorrect from the military viewpoint.

All this points to the extremely close interweaving of home and foreign policy at the present stage of the general crisis of capitalism.

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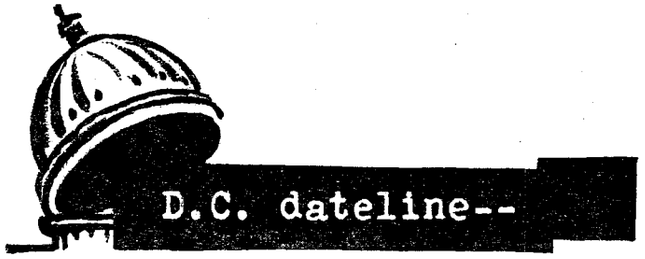

The High Cost of Red Herring

Washington.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN's radio broadcast last Friday night was another one of those anti-climaxes which White House correspondents have come to expect of late. This wasn't due to the pressure of time or lack of preparation. Newsmen waited in the press room until eight o'clock Friday evening for copies of the text promised them three or four hours earlier. The rumor was that the speech was undergoing considerable rewriting.

When it emerged, it was something less than sensational. Actually, it did not go beyond the mimeographed statement which Mr. Truman had read aloud to us in his office on the previous afternoon. It spoke of Western Europe's need for dollars with considerably more moderation than the President used last March when he first broached plans for the Greco-Turkish adventure. And although there was a certain unaccustomed candor in Mr. Truman's discussion of the danger of depression if high prices were not checked, he did not give any hint as to the type of anti-inflation action he would recommend to Congress.

It is now agreed in all quarters that the recommendations the President has in mind are not drastic. Well-informed government people say they will include extension of the curbs on installment selling (which expire November 1), continuation of export controls (which expire February 29), and the power to ration grain and other scarce materials. It is also considered likely Congress will be asked to establish by law a higher margin for trading in grain futures. Consumer rationing and price controls are not in the cards but there is a slight chance Mr. Truman may ask reimposition of the excess profits tax.

The reaction of the commodity exchanges and the stock market was a significant indication of how the big money people appraised developments in the capital. After the President's announcement Thursday that he was convening Congress in special session November 17, grains fell precipitately on the Chicago exchange and stocks and bonds dipped. But Saturday morning steel had a moderate rise and fluctuations in commodities narrowed. As United Press said, "Wall Street re-read President Truman's talk. . . . It was considered highly unlikely that any move will get under way to return the nation to actual rationing and price controls."

In view of these facts, I found it a little embarrassing to read the laudatory telegrams sent Mr. Truman by some of my progressive friends. One, for instance, read: "Warmest congratulations on your courageous action . . . believe you have acted the role of a world statesman."

It is not impossible that a movement of labor and consumers may compel the President and Congress to take "courageous action" to deal adequately with the problem of inflation. Unfortunately, however, this is certainly not their aim now. In fact, there is plenty of evidence that Mr. Truman included the section on inflation in both his statement to the press and his radio talk as a political afterthought. Representative Halleck (R., Ind.), the House majority leader, told reporters that he was taken by surprise when the President sprung the issue of prices at his conference with Congressional leaders Thursday. He had made "no suggestion" of price legislation at their earlier conference in September, said Halleck.

Just to clear up any doubts which might have lingered in our minds, Senator Barkley (D., Ky.), Senate minority leader, told us that "of course" the request for foreign aid appropriation would have priority when the special session gets under way. All of which suggests a wee bit of subterfuge in the very deliberate manner in which the President's two formal utterances on the subject have placed the objectives of checking inflation first and foremost.

I WAS interested to see that the London *Economist,* which is usually so right in its facts and so wrong in its predictions, thinks Mr. Truman's proposals for interim grants to Western Europe will go through Congress in fine shape while the more ambitious Marshall Plan is likely to bog down. What the *Economist* forgets is that in the Republican Party it is SOP (standard operating procedure, to you non-vets) to clip fifty percent off every administration-sponsored appropriation. They may not succeed in whittling down the pending proposal that much, because as a last resort the State Department can dig up a new "Communist threat." Or the news from the Council of Foreign Ministers, which will be in session in London beginning November 25, may be suitable for sensational treatment in our press. But as of this writing, the GOP is busily priming its muskets.

The President has obligingly set up his appropriation requests like a row of ducks at the shooting gallery. In September he said $580,000,000 would be needed for France, Italy and Austria. Under-Secretary of State Lovett raised the ante to $800,000,000. Since then, we have by the so-called "scraping the barrel" operation found $247,000,000 for France and a substantial sum for Italy.

Now the President has set the figure at $642,000,000. But as Senator Taft has pointed out, this amount is exclusive of the needs for bi-zonal Germany, Austria, Japan and the American zone of Korea. With Britain unable to pay her share of occupation costs, $375,000,000 is needed immediately for Germany. Taft estimates Congress will be asked to appropriate over a billion dollars even before the Marshall Plan debate begins. My own estimate is higher.

In any event, these contradictions will serve the Republicans as evidence either that the administration is withholding the truth or that it is hopelessly confused. They have already declared they want more information before they commit themselves. And regardless of how they finally vote on Mr. Truman's new drive to save the world from communism, they will not overlook the opportunity to lay the blame for high prices on the White House doorstep.

All in all, it looks like an exciting session coming up. Unfortunately, there will be few who will oppose the program on the sound grounds that relief to Europe should not be political. Anti-communism has become the battle cry of all but a handful of Congressmen, and most of those who reject the Truman program will out-Red-bait the administration Red-baiters. One can only hope that outside of Congress, where progressives are more numerous, the issues will be discussed in their proper perspective.

A. L. J.

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review and comment

IN DEFENSE OF SCIENCE

An English philosopher defines the social role of idealism and shamefaced materialism.

By HOWARD SELSAM

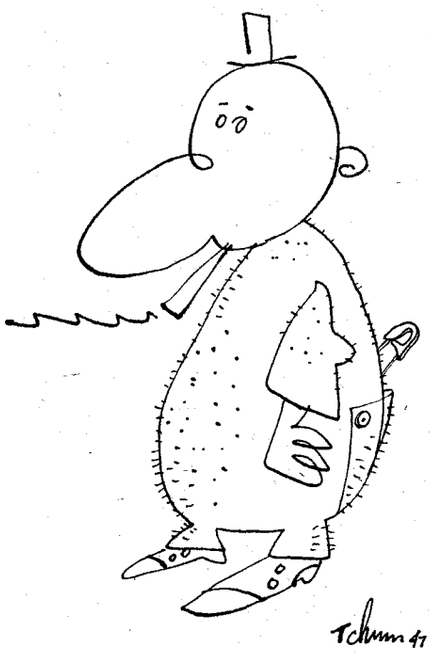
SCIENCE AND IDEALISM, *by Maurice Cornforth. International.* $2.50.

IT IS an event to have a full-length book on philosophy from Maurice Cornforth. While unknown in this country, he has appeared previously in England in such diverse organs of thought as the austere "Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society" and the Marxist magazine *The Modern Quarterly*.

Cornforth has sought to fill the well-recognized need among Marxist students of philosophy to apply the principles and method employed by Lenin in his great classic, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, to the continuation of the teachings of Mach in the various doctrines of "logical positivism" and "logical empiricism." But Cornforth not only makes this necessary and useful analysis of the development, in the forty years since Lenin's book, of this now-dominant philosophical position. He also carries his discussion back to the early seventeenth century with Francis Bacon, and traces the growth of what has long been known as "British empiricism" from Bacon to David Hume.

One of the results is a history of one of the two major traditions of all modern philosophy, that of empiricism, as opposed to the Continental rationalism represented by Descartes, Leibnitz, Spinoza and Hegel. It is fortunate that Cornforth limited himself in this way, inasmuch as the material, the approach and the conclusion of the other tradition are so different in form that only confusion for the reader would result. I say confusion for the reader because I believe the task a possible and highly desirable one, but we do not yet have for its realization either a clear line of analysis or a philosophically-educated progressive public ready for it. Cornforth himself shows his recognition of the problem in his all-too-brief discussion of Kant, in which he points out how Kant stood at the major crossroads and became so important because he is the chief link between British empiricism and Continental rationalism. But this is in no way a criticism of Cornforth for not being more inclusive. Marx and Engels spent most of their criticism on the Continental tradition. Lenin largely confined himself to the empirical one, while each of course made most significant references to the other.

What Cornforth has set out to do he has done. And he has done it in such a way that little can be added. One might almost say nothing, but for the analysis of certain other forms of the same empiricism, such as those of Peirce, James and Dewey in this country. But even in this respect both the material and the method are there and one needs only to study American pragmatism thoroughly in the light of these.



Such a book obviously has difficulties for the non-professional reader. There are chapters on such a technical level as to make them incomprehensible to any but the trained professional student of philosophy or the diligent and long-searching layman. A great virtue, however, is that all but these unavoidably technical portions are written so clearly and with such constant reference to the world of everyday experience that any normally intelligent person can read them with pleasure and profit. One thinks especially, in this connection, of Chapters One to Six (constituting Part I of the book), Chapter Thirteen, and the conclusion. In fact the introduction is itself a gem of simple profundity, while the five-page conclusion is an exciting venture in the realm of the social basis and social role of ideology. With the slightest editing, the first part of the book, pp. 1 to 95, and the last, pp. 227 to 264, could be published as a pamphlet, leaving the intervening materials to the philosophical technicians as documentation and proof of the theses of the opening and closing portions. But since there is not such a pamphlet one can only recommend the whole book, with the special confidence that the reader who really wants to find his way around in twentieth-century bourgeois philosophy can derive immense profit.

The theme of the book is easily told. In England during the seventeenth century materialist philosophy moved in an extraordinary healthy direction, especially in the sphere of the origin and nature of human knowledge. Locke's "empiricism" established with a thoroughness and a detail never before seen the ancient thesis of materialism that the senses are the source of all human knowledge. At the same time, Locke, like the bourgeoisie for whom he spoke, was unable to do without religion and thus to develop a consistently materialist world view. Further, there were inconsistencies in his theory of knowledge itself, due to the particular stage of scientific development and the mechanistic tendencies in his thought. But these inconsistencies and difficulties did not prevent

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Locke from believing that we got through our senses real knowledge of the real world. They were seized upon, however, by Berkeley and later by Hume to deny the very thing Locke sought to explain. The result was that in Hume we got the first of that distinctively modern type of idealist philosophy which, beginning with sense data, denies the possibility of any reference to an objective world from which they are derived and which they reflect.

Cornforth carries this development on through Kant and then to Mach in preparation for Part II of the work. This is devoted to the further "development" of this "empiricist" philosophy through the use of special forms of logical analysis, in Bertrand Russell, Wittgenstein and Rudolf Carnap (the chief spokesman in our day of the "Vienna School").

The underlying social-political conclusion of the book is: "The philosophy of logical analysis, logical positivism, etc., stands revealed as the philosophy of the cautious middle-class 'intellectual,' of the professional, technical or scientific worker, who genuinely wants as an individual to accept and use science, but who does not want to commit himself on fundamental issues or to be involved in great social controversies."

Further, behind these individuals stand the powerful forces of contemporary capitalism, forces "whose monopolistic interests conflict with the interests of the majority of the people, and which seek to limit the application of science rather to securing private profits and the conquest of commercial and political rivals, than to securing human happiness and the conquest of nature by man. Their interests are protected by means of material force and economic power; and also by the fostering of ignorance, superstition, doubts and fears among the masses. The whole objective social role of theories which deny the objectivity of scientific knowledge is that they obscure the theoretical, practical and social significance of science, and leave the way open for the deception of the masses by religious, idealistic and anti-scientific illusions." Cornforth believes that the advance of science and life are going to leave behind those philosophers "who separate their philosophical ideas from the struggle for progress," and that it is a materialist philosophy alone that can help in the achievement of the liberation of humanity from poverty, oppression and superstition.

It was naturally somewhat regrettable to this reviewer that Mr. Cornforth found need to criticize me for my use of "Occam's Razor" in my *What Is Philosophy?* I think that his discussion (pp. 252-254) tends rather to uphold the position I took than otherwise. But it would be better to reserve this question for a separate statement than to enter into a controversy now where it could have the effect of distracting attention from the extraordinarily valuable book Cornforth has given us.

In conclusion, one can only express the hope that *Science and Idealism,* in spite of the unavoidable difficulty to the ordinary reader of the technical portions, will receive the widest reading in this country. It can do wonders in raising the level of philosophical understanding of the whole progressive movement, especially in the colleges. It will also contribute immensely in creating both the desire and the audience for comparable studies of pragmatism, especially as developed by John Dewey, and other contemporary currents that are similar in their effects to the "empiricism" Cornforth has so admirably handled.

Men and Ore

SONS OF THE STRANGER, *by Fielding Burke. Longmans, Green.* $3.

OF LATE there have been frequent references in the press to the proletarian literature of the 1930's. These references are generally tipped with a nostalgia for those golden days when a growing number of writers came to grips vigorously with the problems facing the people. A new era was being ushered in, and most of America was behind the wheel, pushing hard. Now the wheel has been reversed, the people scattered, bewildered, caught in the spokes. And the writers? Are they the steadfast champions or are they adding to the confusion and illusions, disarming the people who hunger for a decent, democratic and secure life?

A hard core of writers has remained true to its early work and professions, and among these is the novelist Fielding Burke. She has not compromised her principles and turned herself inside out to grab more of the world's goods. She has not crawled to the underside of the leaf to wait until the

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heat is off. If she has not been heard from in years and seemed to have gone underground, it was to come up singing. For in *Sons of the Stranger* she sings the same fresh and courageous song for the American working class which she sang in *Call Home the Heart* and *A Stone Came Rolling*.

Those two early books were among the most notable of the proletarian novels of "the golden days." They had fire, were uncompromising in their defense of the worker, and justly glorified the Communist who led the workers in the strike struggles of those days. They described the flocking of the hill folk to the cities and painted with a wealth of detail their industrialization and brutalization. In the portrait of Ishma, the heroine of those books, Fielding Burke created a heroic image which still moves us.

In *Sons of the Stranger* Fielding Burke has left North Carolina hill country and mills for the Rocky Mountains and the struggles of the miners of fifty years ago. She tells about a tough and turbulent time when the miners stood up against provocateurs, hunger, the iron heel of terror and all sorts of bestialities. Here you meet the early Wobblies and the wonderful Joe Hill. Men and women, hardened in the struggle like the rich red ore they handle, become aware of the need of linking political and economic action. They speak about Foster and Debs and Marx, and they fight. I have been in some of those Western towns and talked to the old Wobblies, and this novel brings back the iron edge and the morning freshness of the tales they told me.

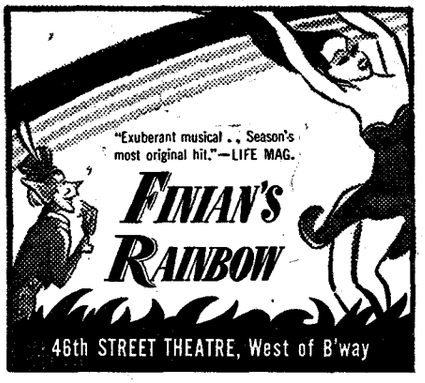
The novel is built around Dal MacNair, who started in the mines as a kid and grew up to be a labor lawyer. Dal falls in love with the sister of the mine owner. He vacillates, leaves the mining town, prosecutes one of the labor leaders, and only after a long and bitter struggle with himself does he return to his own people to take his place in the fight.

The subject and background of this novel then are exciting. It must be said, however, that *Sons of the Stranger* does not carry the power and beauty of the early novels. The characters are often wooden; their action and dialogue do not always ring true. Idealized, they are given stilts to make them bigger than life, and as generally happens in such cases, they end up being smaller. The give and take between characters in which men and women change positions as in a match or dance, in which they exchange power and mirror one another and grow and develop, where ideas and emotions are lobbed back and forth in dialogue which carries the natural cut of the people behind it — not enough of this is found in the novel.

The story is confusing at times. Like a mountain stream it swerves and cuts around obstacles dropped awkwardly by the novelist, only to dash off and leave scenes and characters up in the air like a spray. It is only in the second half of the book that there is a deeper groove, and we get to understand the central character. The narrative begins to acquire the depth and steadiness necessary to carry real weight. But even here the relationship between Dal and the other characters depends too much on the long arm of coincidence, and there is too much strain on the reader's belief.

The talent of Fielding Burke is lyrical. Her indignation at the exploiters, her compassion for the people, her profound faith in their ultimate triumph are expressed in many poetic passages. These do not, however, help her solve the problems which she has set for herself in her novel. The growth and struggle of these people must be expressed in terms of action and idiom personal to, and varying with, each character. You do not have that drama and variety. Even in as simple an episode as the killing of a dog by the sergeant who tries to rape Dal's sweetheart, we don't get the proper impact —we barely see the dog and the man and woman; we don't get into their emotions, into their thinking.

In reading this novel I was reminded of another Southern novelist —Ellen Glasgow. Like Fielding Burke she was a member of the resistance movement to which all sensitive and courageous artists belong who work under heartbreaking conditions in a society whose switches are pulled by barbarians. Her first novel was about a Socialist, another about a Claude Pepper kind of hero who dies defending a Negro from a lynch mob. Though there are air-pockets in her work and she was unable to understand the realism of the Dreiser school and the working-class movement of the 1930's, she was a democrat, an artist, a fine story-teller. When she described a dog like the general's setter in *The Sheltered Life*, that dog lived



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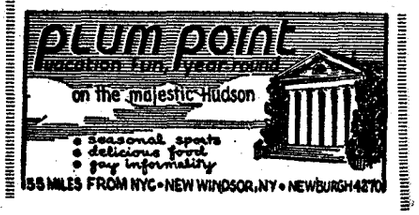
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for us. Here is an outstanding novelist of the South from whom all of us can learn.

And yet there is no evidence in Fielding Burke or in any of our other writers, with the exception of Barbara Giles in her magnificent *The Gentle Bush,* which indicates that we have begun to study a novelist who has so much to offer us and whom the proletarian writers of the "golden day" so sadly underestimated, as can be seen from Granville Hicks' superficial and snobbish comment in *The Great Tradition.*

Sons of the Stranger is the work of a woman whose warm heart beats in every page and every word. It is a book which was lovingly labored over. And yet it is the kind of a book in which the idealist and champion of the people is not fully and creatively wedded to the story-teller and craftsman; they sleep in different beds. The sensitiveness to the needs and demands of the people whose cause the author defends is not reflected imaginatively in a sensitiveness to the needs and demands of the characters who people her novel. There must be that wedding and reflection if we are to have characters like Ishma, if we are to have novels from Fielding Burke as significant as her early ones.

BEN FIELD.

Books Received

MONA LISA'S MUSTACHE: *A Dissection of Modern Art, by T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings. Knopf.* $3. (1) Dull, (2) Absurd, (3) Inconsequential. A tempest in a tea-pot. The author tries to prove that modern art is a dark conspiracy to revive primitive magic, mesmerize the masses and seize power. He also labors to show that the bourgeoisie, whom the artist-conspirators mock and malign, are the paragons of science, sanity and freedom. He tries so hard he ends by attributing German and Italian fascism, not to his beloved businessmen, but to a cabal of futurists spiced with a fringe of expressionists. (We feel subversive. We think we'll paint a cube.)

THE RECORD OF AMERICAN DIPLOMACY, *selected and edited by Ruhl J. Bartlett. Knopf.* $6. A useful collection of documents indicating the highlights in the development of American foreign policy. The expert will find the volume a handy one but most readers will want to know more of the events behind the record than can be got from a presidential statement or a treaty.

FIRESIDE BOOK OF FOLKSONGS, *selected and edited by Margaret Bradford Boni. Simon & Schuster.* $3.95. There are 147 folksongs of all countries in this intelligently-conceived volume. You will find everything here, from "Lowlands" to "Freiheit." The material has been excellently prepared for group singing, and arranged for piano by Norman Lloyd. There are over five hundred charming color illustrations by Alice and Martin Provensen. A fine buy for a gift, but a good book for anyone who likes to sing some of the best songs of all time.

THE UNKNOWN VAN GOGH. *Touchstone Press.* $1. Eleven reproductions of Van Gogh's drawings of life in the Borinage, the mining and farming districts along the Dutch-Belgian border. The portfolio includes a four-page descriptive leaflet with excerpts from Vincent's letters to his brother, Theo. The drawings reveal an altogether too little-known aspect of his genius.

THE PORTABLE RUSSIAN READER, *selected, translated and introduced by Bernard Guilbert Guerney. Viking.* $2. As with all collections, one is tempted to praise and question this one. There are excellent excerpts from both pre-revolutionary and Soviet writers. On the other hand, one may question both inclusions and omissions, among the former that of "The Grand Inquisitor" from *The Brothers Karamazov* and among the latter the work of Sholokhov and Leonov.

A man set out to buy CLARKTON . . .

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sights and sounds

WHO WAS SHYLOCK?

The Yiddish Art Theater presents a revision of the anti-Semitic stereotype of the Merchant.

By ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

It is not its literary preeminence but latent anti-Semitism on the part of educational authorities that has kept *The Merchant of Venice* in public-school curriculums. Any number of other Shakespeare plays are at least as suitable on esthetic grounds, and infinitely preferable for the development of a balanced social sense in impressionable childhood. To justify the play as a school text would call for a load of corrective historical erudition that would be difficult for school children to carry even if it were supplied. *The Merchant of Venice,* as literary education, comes to little more than a course in anti-Semitism.

For those uncritical assimilators of the cultural heritage who would swallow Shakespeare whole, *The Merchant of Venice* is probably the segment that sticks most painfully in their throats. Invariably listed as a "comedy," it is interesting to note how similar its elements are to the tragedy *King Lear. Lear* is also tricked of his favorite daughter and his estate, but being a royal Christian his fate is portrayed as a tragedy. Since the victim in *The Merchant of Venice* is a Jew a similar fate is a happy ending and the play a comedy.

All the efforts to explain this away are futile. It is best to accept the fact that Shakespeare, here, acted as a transmitter of common prejudice. He could not have known or even seen a Jew in his entire life, since the Jews had been prohibited residence in England for three centuries, and were not to be permitted in the country until the Puritan revolution. Shakespeare wrote within the prejudiced conventions of his times. Within these conventions his own humanity and wisdom often broke through, in speeches like Shylock's moving self-defense and in frequent and eloquent assertions of human dignity and essential equality.

Nevertheless the conventions were not premeditatively contravened in any of Shakespeare's plays, and perhaps least of all in *The Merchant of Venice.* Shakespeare observed the literary convention that imposed inhuman avarice on the Jew in his portrayal of Shylock and the literary convention that imposed boorishness on the lower classes in his portrayal of the servant Gobbo. We may honor Shakespeare for occasionally transcending the conventions, but not to the point of denying his observance of them.

Considering the part played by *The Merchant of Venice* in keeping the anti-Semitic convention respectable in literature—I think of Fitzgerald's Jewish racketeer in *The Great Gatsby* and Edith Wharton's ecstasy over it as his outstanding achievement—and the encouragement the play has given to anti-Semitism in general, it is not amiss to raise some restraining balks of truth against it. This was the purpose of the Hebrew writer, Ibn Zahav, in his novel *Shylock and His Daughter,* from which the noted actor-manager Maurice Schwartz has made an effective stage adaptation, now having a successful run at the Yiddish Art Theater. It is interesting to recall in this connection that *The Merchant of Venice,* too, was a stage adaptation, as were other of Shakespeare's plays, of a contemporary Italian novel.

To document his account, specifically intended as a revision of the Shylock story, Ibn Zahav made a study of Italian history, particularly the history of Venice and Rome. He observed that the time setting of the play was a particularly savage pogrom period, one of the crises of the Catholic "counter-reformation" forced upon the Church by the Protestant inroads. Smarting at its losses and at the Protestant charges of laxity, Catholic Christianity sought additions to its ranks of souls by forced conversions and underwent an orgy of piety at the expense of the Italian Jewish communities. The ghetto seclusion and the economic restrictions against the Jews were intensified. Jews were imprisoned and burnt alive. There was also a burning of Jewish books.

In that period and, indeed, all through European history until the comparative emancipation effected by the French Revolution, the Jewish man of wealth had a special and peculiar status as representative and protector of the Jewish community. Thus in a particularly naked way the identity of economic and political power—so far as the Jewish community was permitted political power—was recognized in law and custom. Shylock would inevitably have had such a role; and it is understandable that Venetian anti-Semitism should have made him its target.

Apart from the basic change of attitude the chief revisions in the Shylock story made by Zahav and his adapter, are in the pound of flesh episode and the role of Shylock's daughter, Jessica. Research discloses only one instance in Italian history of such a forfeit of human flesh, and this in a lawsuit involving Christians only. Considering the Jewish situation and way of life, Shakespeare's version is a violation of psychological as well as historical truth. Zahav's revision, which makes the terms originate with Antonio as a baiting expression of contempt and challenge, has far the greater plausibility.

Less can be said for the revision which denies Jessica's apostasy. Even in the Zahav version Jessica appears as a beautiful, wealthy and life-awakened woman tortured by the frustrations imposed by her position as a ghetto notable's daughter. We see her brought by her social position into occasional contacts with the free Chris-

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tian world at its most glamorous upper levels. We see her chafing at the drabness and humiliation of ghetto life and at the authority of a stern father. Entry into the Christian community must inevitably have appeared to such a woman as Zahav depicts as a liberation. Here, history is on Shakespeare's side. The assimilation of Jews has proceeded, in all generations and ceaselessly, through varying degrees of apostasy, and primarily on the top layers.

The revision strains one's belief when it sends Jessica on a mission of piety for which her behavior shows little preparation or plausibility. Her conversion is admitted but is made unwilling and trancelike. And she is returned to the Jewish fold in the only way permitted a Jewish convert to Christianity in that era—through suicide.

This may satisfy national feeling but it is hard to fit into Zahav's portrait of Jessica.

This is the weak point in the writing and curiously enough in the performance as well. Charlotte Goldstein, though appealingly lovely as Jessica, plays her role, particularly in the conversion scene, with seeming half-heartedness, as if she could not throw herself completely into a role so distasteful to her.

The important contribution of *Shylock and His Daughter* consists not only in the historical truths it restores but in its social and psychological truths as well. The play makes clear that it was the aim of the persecuting communities to have the persecuted Jews feel like aliens and sinners by their own standards. It was the persecuting community that made the ghetto, not the people imprisoned in it; the persecuting community that was guilty of usury, not the people condemned to it for their livelihood. These social and psychological truths are presented with eloquence and dramatic skill.

Shylock and His Daughter has good dramatic substance of its own but its importance lies in its purpose, which it goes far to fulfill. It is a valuable corrective to hoary falsehoods which the authority of Shakespeare's incomparable artistry has served only too well.

Mr. Schwartz's Yiddish Art Theater has given *Shylock and His Daughter* a striking and effective production, in which his own performance of Shylock is outstanding.

THE ART OF BEN SHAHN

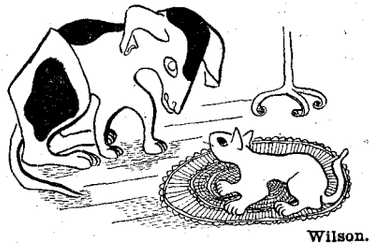
BEN SHAHN's development as one of our sturdiest social-minded painters may now be studied at the Museum of Modern Art till December 4. Beginning with his brilliant reportage on the Sacco-Vanzetti case we can follow him through his mural and poster projects, his bitter chronicles of the depression years, aspects of the New Deal, the war and the late nostalgic city scenes, the latter perhaps the most satisfying of all his work.

Shahn's work reveals a politically mature mind with a poet's sympathy for humanity and his social commentary can be grim, tender and satiric by turns.

His famous Sacco and Vanzetti series of 1931-32 combine acute psychological observations of character with the most trenchant satire. The gouache of "Sacco and Vanzetti and Their Guards" is a fine revelation of the martyred workers' monumental dignity and the studies of Boston's legal hypocrites are scalpel-sharp. The series may be compared to journalism at its finest, like Heywood Broun's protest against the same case before the New York *World* decided to oust him. The Tom Mooney series (1932-33), while full of expressive moments, has not quite the fresh power of the earlier group. A beautiful study of two female witnesses, however, must be noted. In this example a certain poetry of mood together with the deft character drawing foreshadows aspects of his later work.

In 1934 Shahn worked on murals commissioned by the Federal Art Project. The Riker's Island Penitentiary mural plan, contrasting old and new penal codes, was finally turned down by the prison authorities. Shahn's social convictions were too earnest for the swivelchair folk.

The socially dynamic changes wrought by the people under the New Deal, however, changed Shahn's fortune, and he was commissioned to do some government murals. Unfortunately, no studies of these are in the exhibit. From 1935 to 1938 he took many photos of the country's people for another government department. For a time this retarded his development as a painter. At least, the first paintings to emerge after his camera period are bleakly colored and show a subservience to small forms and rather clever detail, as in "Vacant Lot" and "Handball Court." This is followed by a preoccupation with childhood memories and with his early sordid environment containing nostalgic overtones reminiscent of the photo collage. An almost primitive love of detail juts out in some work, or a sharp, angular stylization seems to be glued on to an atmospheric background. Shahn, in this phase, seems desperately bent on merging his caustic observations of people and incidents with the flat monumental stylization inherent in his earlier mural work. But even his failures are absorbing because of a grim, stolid drive he forces into his work. "Self-Portrait When Young" and "Seurat's Lunch" are examples of this phase.



Wilson.

Then there is a whole chapter of poster work, vigorous and broadly designed, carrying on his social faith on a direct political level. His "Register-Vote" poster with two grandly designed welders was done for PAC. An earlier poster done for the Resettlement Administration contains one of the most moving drawings of a Negro done by a contemporary artist.

In some of the late war work Shahn begins to reassemble and fuse his diverse imagery, "Italian Landscape" being a notable picture. Three gaunt widows are set against a group of bombed ruins. Tragedy and compassion are sharply blended. The "Pacific Landscape," on the other hand, is effective but too contrived. The fallen Marine is mechanically stylized against a stunt-textured beach. Here and there in the show are pictures the artist has not felt out in the full emotional sense and in these an illustrative cunning mars the larger concept.

It is the latest work, the 1947 vintage, that bears the best fruits of Shahn's long labor. Here we have a satisfying synthesis of form and content. Shrewd drawing and a fine symbolism unite within the framework of a broad design. The New York scene of the fish peddler and street urchin, though an intimate genre picture,

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might easily be a fragment of a fine fresco. "Spring," "Renascence" and "Carnival" deal with the theme of hope and passion slowly budding within the sullen city, like a blade of grass tenaciously pushing itself through a pavement crevice. His feeling for human beings has become warmer and more mellow, and these works have a fine understanding of the unexpected contrasts of life. Shahn, all in all, has made a most important contribution to a people's art. JOSEPH SOLMAN.

RECORDS

ALONG with the sour note of a price increase, Columbia offers some splendid recordings both of interesting debuts and old favorites. Benjamin Britten, the sensation among the younger British composers, appears with "The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra," consisting of thirteen variations and a fugue on a theme of Purcell. It is the best Stravinsky I have heard not written by the master himself; often gay, always smart, enjoyably transparent and more than a little glib. The performance is by Malcolm Sargeant and the Liverpool Philharmonic, and the recording is amazingly good (Columbia 703).

Mozart's Clarinet Quintet, K. 581, one of his most beautiful works, is given a silken-smooth performance by Reginald Kell and the Philharmonia Quartet (Columbia 702). The same composer's Horn Concerto, K. 495, smaller in scope but an inspired work, is perfectly performed by Dennis Brain and an unnamed conductor (Columbia 285). Joseph Szigeti and Bruno Walter, leading the New York Philharmonic, provide a phenomenal reading of the Beethoven Violin Concerto that almost reminds one of chamber music in its intimacy, profoundly thought out in every note. The violin is exceptionally well recorded (Columbia 697). The Polish conductor, Paul Kletzki, leads the Philharmonia orchestra in a well-drilled performance of the Tschaikowsky Fifth Symphony. It is orchestrally stunning and dramatically accented, but I prefer a warmer and simpler approach to Tschaikowsky (Columbia 701).

The young pianist William Kapell does Beethoven's sweetly melodic and brilliant Second Piano Concerto in B Flat with admirably clean finger work and a rightness of style not found in some more famous and romantically-inclined pianists. The excellent conducting is by Vladimir Golschman, with the St. Louis Symphony (RCA Victor 1132). Jussi Bjoerlung does a fine job with tenor arias from *Masked Ball* and *Andrea Chenier*. James Melton, while not in the same class, sounds well, as he always does on records, in the popular arias from *Carmen* and *Martha* (RCA Victor).

S. FINKELSTEIN.

★

AMERICAN-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP RALLY

The Dean of
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the Very Reverend Hewlett Johnson, will address a rally in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Soviet Union and the 14th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Distinguished American and Soviet speakers will also address this meeting, sponsored by the National Council of American Soviet Friendship.

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